COMMENTARY

Harmony sings for everyone

ROSEMARY HARRIS

The words "make them hear you" came almost as whispers. So subtle and sweet and powerful and demanding.

Evoking so many emotions.

Evoking tears.

It was three weeks ago that the gay and lesbian members of Harmony: A Colorado Chorale took the stage at Packard Hall in a benefit performance of "Live the Dream," a tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.

Their music was an apt soundtrack for a city where the discussions have again returned to gay rights, human spirit and a community's soul.

Last week, the City Council declined to revisit the city's 1997 resolution that bans discrimination, including "sexual" discrimination.

There's debate over what "sexual" means, but Colorado for Family Values apparently believes it has something to do with gay rights. So, CFV wants voters to decide whether gays and lesbians should be protected from discrimination. It's an idea that's framed with the slogan "no special rights."

How do we make them hear?

Given the history of this city and this issue, that is a question born of pure frustration.

The frustration of Amendment 2, which would have prohibited laws protecting gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. The frustration evident even in the institutional voice of the U.S. Supreme Court when it ruled, "This Colorado cannot do." The frustration of a mayor who called this old debate "mean-spirited."

Just plain mean.

We must make them hear.

Harmony speaks, and sings, with authority on this subject. I know this because I was invited to "Live the Dream" to read from the writings of King.

The readings would come between selections by Harmony — that was on the script.

The tears defied scripting.

They built up as I listened to Harmony's interpretation of traditional freedom songs such as "Down by the Riverside" and "Same Train."

They built up as I watched the powerful expressions of artistic director Lee Ann Bryce as she led the chorus in the refrain "We who believe in freedom cannot rest."

They built up as Harmony sang the timeless theme song of civil rights, "We Shall Overcome."

And when they got to that part, "We are not afraid," the lights came on and the tears flowed.

From my eyes. From all the eyes.

We understood that the songs of civil rights apply to all of us — white, black, gay, lesbian, straight.

All of us.

See **HARRIS**/NEWS2

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KICK-OFF GATHERING

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U.S. Olympic Complex, Sports Center One
(Enter on Boulder Street just west of Union Boulevard)

Community Conversation on Race is bringing people together in small, balanced groups for safe, meaningful exploration of issues of race in Colorado Springs.

Guest Speaker: Mayor Mary Lou Makepeace

Registrations accepted at event
Call 634-1525 for more information

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Harris/Speak out with words, actions

From NEWS1

And if that wasn't clear enough, the words I read from King's speech "A Time to Break Silence" drove home the responsibility we have when the talk turns to "special rights."

"I am sorry to say that I am absolutely convinced that the forces of ill will in our nation, the extreme rightists of our nation, have used time much more effectively than the forces of good will.

"And it may well be that we have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people. But for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people."

King's words are just as fitting today as when he spoke them in '67.

The mean-spirited minority will always make a big noise.

It is the responsibility of the moderate among us to make a bigger noise.

To make them hear — and see.

With our friendships.

With how we spend our dollars.

With how we select our leaders.

With our defiance, if need be. With our emotions, if need be. With our votes.

With our tears.

With hands joined across causes.

With a resolve that says, Hate has no place here.

Not here.

Not in our community.

Rosemary Harris' column appears Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. To reach her, write P.O. Box 1779, Colorado Springs 80901, send e-mail to harris@gazette.com or phone 636-0195. Column edited by Cliff Foster. Headline by Sarah Marquardt.

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after she called 911 to request an ambulance. She told police she came home to her unit in Fountain View Apartments and discovered her son wasn't breathing. When paramedics arrived, they described Rashad as being only skin and bones. The boy was dead when he arrived at Memorial Hospital.

Sublett, who earned about $22,000 a year

mental problems that caused the death of Rashad. She suffered severe depression at the time, and she said she was numb."

Prosecutor Dan Wilson painted a different picture of Sublett.

"She admits that sometimes she left (the children) alone and sometimes went for a

See **SUBLETT**/NEWS2

SITUATION

Jerilee Bennett/The Gazette